CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture

ISSN 1481-4374

Purdue University Press ©Purdue University

Volume 21 | (2019) Issue 7

Article 3

"The Headwaters of a River of Failure": Detroit as an Icon of American Decline

Jae H. Roe

Sogang University

Recommended Citation

Roe, Jae H ""The Headwaters of a River of Failure": Detroit as an Icon of American Decline." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 21.7 (2019): <https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.3661>

PURDUE UNIVERSITY PRESS <http://www.thepress.purdue.edu>

CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture

ISSN 1481-4374 <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb>

CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture, the peer-reviewed, full-text, and open-access learned journal in the humanities and social sciences, publishes new scholarship following tenets of the discipline of comparative literature and the field of cultural studies designated as "comparative cultural studies." In addition to the publication of articles, the journal publishes review articles of scholarly books and publishes research material in its *Library Series.* Publications in the journal are indexed in the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature (Chadwyck-Healey), the Arts and Humanities Citation Index (Thomson Reuters ISI), the Humanities Index (Wilson), Humanities International Complete (EBSCO), the International Bibliography of the Modern Language Association of America, and Scopus (Elsevier). The journal is affiliated with the Purdue University Press monograph series of Books in Comparative Cultural Studies. Contact: <clcweb@purdue.edu>

Volume 21 Issue 7 (December 2019) Article 3
Jae H. Roe,
"'The Headwaters of a River of Failure:' Detroit as an Icon of American Decline"
<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol21/iss7/3>

Contents of ***CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 21.7 (2019)**
Special Issue ***Monstrosity and Globalization***. **Ed. Ju Young Jin and Jae H. Roe**
<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol21/iss7/>

Abstract: This essay analyzes films (*8 Mile*, *Gran Torino*, *It Follows*) and television series (*Hung*, *Low Winter Sun*) that use the setting of Detroit to depict characters who are dealing with deteriorating socioeconomic conditions and whose choices and relationships reflect their difficulties in, and anxieties about, adjusting to such conditions. While the familiar icons of Detroit's decline appear in all of these texts, the narratives evolve from working class realism to satire and ultimately horror, or from anxieties about white working-class displacement to the displacement of such anxieties. The history of Detroit illustrates the complex ways in which global forces interact with specific socioeconomic conditions and political structures, but the depictions of Detroit in American popular culture illustrate the difficulty of comprehending the complexity of these problems. The icons of Detroit's decline become simultaneously more recognizable and less graspable, their history evaporating and leaving behind only the vague anxiety and horror evoked by their familiar images. The protagonists of these narratives lose a cognitive map of their lives, their city, their country; the resentment and anxieties reflected in these texts become increasingly volatile and dangerous as the socioeconomic conditions that produce them become more difficult to map and seemingly inescapable.

Jae H. ROE

"The Headwaters of a River of Failure:" Detroit as an Icon of American Decline

The story of Detroit's decline from its heyday as the "motor city" that drove American economic development to its current status as the rust belt city that most represents the devastation of American manufacturing has been told many times, but the data illustrating this decline are still shocking. In 2009, "unemployment peaked at 24.9 percent" and "36.2 percent of Detroit's population was living beneath the official poverty line" (Sugrue xv). In the first decade of the century, "Detroit lost a remarkable 25 percent of its population" (xv), which forced the city to "reduce its workforce by about half" (xviii) as tax revenues vanished. By the time Detroit declared bankruptcy in 2013, the city was "40 percent vacant" (LeDuff 236) with no money or viable plans to redevelop and repopulate the empty spaces. As Detroit became an icon of American industrial and economic decline, the former landmarks of its heyday also became increasingly familiar as icons. the ruins of landmarks like the Packard plant, Michigan Central Station, and the Michigan Theater building are recognized as visual signs of how "the city of promise" has become "a scrap yard of dreams" (LeDuff 137). The Packard plant is perhaps the most iconic of these so-called ruins of Detroit. The plant has been left abandoned since the Packard automobile company closed it in 1956, and over the years, as Detroit's economic decline continued and unemployment and poverty increased, "scavengers" would "light a section of the building on fire" to expose building materials like steel and copper that could be "[sold] at the scrap yard" (51). The plant, thus, is the perfect symbol of the economic devastation and social deterioration left behind by the American automobile industry, which continued to decline rapidly during this century with the so-called Big Three (GM, Ford, and Chrysler) laying off "more than 330,000 employees" (Ingrassia 3). However, the causes of Detroit's decline are much more complicated than the decline of American manufacturing, and as the closing of the Packard plant in 1956 illustrates, this process started long before Americans started to see the ruins of Detroit as symbols of how deindustrialization and global economic forces wrecked manufacturing regions and working class neighborhoods.

In the twenty-first century, Detroit has often been used as the setting for films like *8 Mile* (2002), *Gran Torino* (2008), and *It Follows* (2014) and television series like HBO's *Hung* (2009) and AMC's *Low Winter Sun* (2013). In all of these examples, the setting is Detroit because the narratives involve characters who are dealing with deteriorating socioeconomic conditions and whose choices and relationships reflect their difficulties in, and anxieties about, adjusting to such conditions. And the ruins of Detroit are used for dramatic effect, with the expectation that viewers will recognize their iconicity and the destructive forces and tragic consequences that they symbolize. *8 Mile* tells the story of Rabbit, a young man who works at the New Detroit Stamping factory and dreams of escaping his poverty by becoming famous as a rapper. *Gran Torino* tells the story of Walt Kowalski, a decorated Korean War veteran and retired Ford worker, and his relationship with the Hmong community that is repopulating his neighborhood. *Hung* tells the story of Ray Drecker, former star athlete and now high school teacher and coach who has to get a second job as a male prostitute. *Low Winter Sun* tells the story of Frank Agnew, a Detroit Police Department detective who finds himself trapped in a downward spiral that parallels the city's bankruptcy. *It Follows* is a horror film in which Jay and her suburban friends are chased by a nameless monster from Detroit. While the familiar icons of Detroit's decline appear in all of these films and television series, the narratives evolve from working class realism to parody and satire and ultimately horror. And all of the protagonists are white although the population of Detroit is predominantly black. In films like *8 Mile* and *Gran Torino*, the relationships between different races and the implications of whiteness in an environment in which whites are increasingly becoming a minority are at least addressed; in later narratives, race disappears as an issue and is replaced by different kinds of white anxiety. By the time we get to *It Follows*, race and even class disappear as issues that can be understood or even addressed; what we encounter instead is a vague and inescapable sense of dread about what happens in, and spreads from, Detroit. This evolution, from anxieties about white working class displacement to the displacement of such anxieties, reflects how difficult it has become for Americans to make sense of the world around them. Detroit's decline was caused by a combination of deindustrialization and depopulation and mismanagement. The forces that ultimately led to the city's bankruptcy in 2013 are simultaneously local, national, and global. The Packard plant is significant in this regard, since it was one of the first automobile factories in Detroit to be shuttered by the effects of "automation and the beginnings of foreign competition" (LeDuff 81). The history of Detroit illustrates the complex ways in which global forces interact with specific socioeconomic conditions and political structures, but the depictions of Detroit in American popular culture illustrate the difficulty of comprehending the complexity of these problems. The icons of Detroit's decline become simultaneously

more recognizable and less graspable, their history evaporating and leaving behind only the vague anxiety and horror evoked by their familiar images.

In *Monsters of the Market: Zombies, Vampires and Global Capitalism*, David McNally argues that the monsters proliferating in popular culture today are, and have always been, products of capitalism. He refers to capitalism as "a monstrous system…that systematically threatens the integrity of human personhood" (McNally 3) and illustrates how Marx repeatedly used "the language of monstrosity" (McNally 15) to describe capitalism. For example, Marx described capital as a "vampire" that "will not let go while there remains a single muscle, sinew or drop of blood to be exploited" (quoted in McNally 14). If vampires represent the nature of capitalism, an economic system that is based on the exploitation of workers and natural resources and constantly requires more resources to exploit and more ways to squeeze profit from workers, zombies represent what happens to the exploited workers, or their "self-image" as "lifeless, disempowered agents of alien powers" (McNally 253). The proliferation of popular culture monsters can then be understood as a reflection of the inexorable expansion of global capitalism and the anxieties and fears generated by the effects of such expansion. And the popularity of zombies is particularly significant, since more and more people around the world see themselves as losing ground, both in the sense of economic status and stability and in the more literal sense of a place to which they feel connected and by which they can define their own identities. The proliferation of zombie narratives reflects the expansion of such anxieties and fears as more and more people experience economic instability and feel displaced or disoriented; a zombie has no individuality or social function, and has nowhere to go, instead mindlessly following others who also have nowhere to go. McNally uses examples like *Frankenstein* and contemporary African folk stories to demonstrate how "such tales have appeared at a number of compelling moments in the global rise of capitalism" (McNally 16), and argues that monster narratives have been used to give physical form to the causes and effects of socioeconomic change and to express popular anxieties and fears at moments of increasing instability and displacement, "to map an archeology of the invisible" (McNally 201). If Detroit is symbolic of our anxieties about this particular moment in the expansion of global capitalism, the fact that the monster in *It Follows* vaguely resembles a zombie but cannot be identified as anything but "it" indicates something about both the depth and the uncertainty of our anxieties. But before I discuss the popular culture depiction of Detroit and its iconic ruins, I will outline the history of Detroit's decline to provide the necessary context.

A Brief History of Detroit

As Thomas Sugrue details in *The Origins in the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*, race and class combined in complex ways to cause long-term economic decline in Detroit. As "millions of African Americans migrated to the urban North" during the Great Migration, "manufacturing jobs in northeastern and midwestern cities" (Sugrue 7) were already decreasing. Detroit, for example, "lost 134,000 manufacturing jobs" (126) from 1947 to 1963, years that are commonly thought of as part of Detroit's heyday. The common explanation that Detroit's decline was caused by the weakening of labor union membership and influence is also inadequate. "Over half of Detroit's workers belonged to unions in 1950" (11), but growing union influence meant growing insularity and protectionism. The contracts negotiated between the United Automobile Workers and the Big Three included "dozens of distinct job classifications for hourly workers" (Ingrassia 8) so that, for example, "only skilled tradesmen were allowed to repair machinery" (48) in the Big Three's factories. This served to reduce the work that assembly line workers could be forced to do, but it also served to protect the interests of the workers in the trade unions. In the construction industry, "contractors and unions relied on personal references" to hire workers and often "did not publicize job openings" (Sugrue 118) outside of family and community networks. GM accommodated their workers by working with the UAW to give "preference to sons of employees" and require job applicants to "provide the names of relatives who worked at the company" (103). Such insularity also served to protect white workers and their families from increasing competition with black workers, who found themselves "restricted…to particular job categories" (MacLean 18), usually of the lowest-paying and least-stable kind. This situation improved as "civil rights politics" entered Detroit's factories and created an "alliance between the UAW and the NAACP," but with the constitutional battles and anti-communism of the 1950s, the NAACP "turned its energies away from the shop floor" and "purged many of its more militant members" (Sugrue 170). The anxieties of white workers, fueled by racism and growing competition with black workers, and the waning commitment to labor union issues of civil rights groups increasingly dominated by members of the black middle class like Edward Gibbons, a "real estate broker and head of Detroit's NAACP in the 1950s" (203), combined to increase racial tension as well as weaken union influence.

All of these trends were factors in American automobile companies losing their competitiveness in an increasingly global market, but the companies themselves deserve plenty of blame, as Paul Ingrassia reveals in *Crash Course: The American Automobile Industry's Road to Bankruptcy and Bailout – and Beyond*. The outlandish designs of American cars in the 1950s indicate that the "Big Three had taken to competing on style instead of on technology or engineering" (Ingrassia 35), and this led to a decline in the quality and reputation of American cars "just as import sales were growing" (49). By the 1970s, the Big Three were reeling in an increasingly "volatile global environment" with deregulated financial and currency markets that made it "difficult for firms… to predict the costs of investments, or the scale of their earnings" (McNally 159). New terms were coined to make sense of the effects of this global economy, such as "stagflation," meaning a situation in which both the unemployment rate and the inflation rate keep rising, producing a combined figure which became known as the "misery index" (Cowie 222), a "misery" that conventional economics could not explain and the American government did not have a solution for. As economist Wassily Leonteif stated, the problem was not that "the government" did not know which road to take but that it "[did] not even have a road map" (quoted in Cowie 226). In 1979, the UAW "agreed to 403 million dollars in 'givebacks'…so that ailing Chrysler could qualify for government assistance" (Ingrassia 79), and the union was forced to agree to "givebacks" to GM and Ford as well. "On the same day" that the UAW signed a contract giving back much of what its members had fought over many years to gain, GM "disclosed a new pay plan… that made it easier for executives to earn larger bonuses" (79). Understandably, the UAW and its members had no confidence in, and no interest in "giving back" more to, the management of the Big Three, whose excesses and lack of judgement continued. Instead of improving relations with the UAW or investing more in research and engineering, the Big Three, especially GM, turned to financial speculation, which accelerated the bankruptcy of the companies when the markets crashed in 2008. That financial crisis has made the term "derivatives" more familiar; derivatives were created as a "hedge" against the "currency fluctuations" (McNally 159) caused by the market deregulations of the 1970s, but accelerated economic instability by making it possible for companies to make money by betting on the "*future* values" (McNally 162) of almost anything and thus stimulating "a flood of capital into finance rather than production" (Cowie 311). A major part of GM's corporate earnings came from "financing GM dealers and car buyers" through GMAC; as GM's losses mounted, it created Residential Capital (or ResCap) to expand GMAC's business by financing "home mortgages" (Ingrassia 156). Soon, 70 percent of GM's earnings were coming from GMAC and ResCap, "which was writing home mortgages more profitably than the parent company was selling cars" (Ingrassia 159-60). GM continued to speculate in the so-called casino economy until 2007, when ResCap "racked up 1.8 billion dollars in losses" (Ingrassia 203) on the mortgages it had financed. The 2008 financial crisis was a product of the instability built into the global economy, whose supposed growth comes more from speculation in increasingly deregulated financial markets than from the production of anything as tangible as a car. The UAW and especially its rank-and-file members had little control over any of this and no way to comprehend all of the forces that combined to destroy their jobs and economic security.

Going back to the roots of the racial and class conflicts in Detroit, housing is another central issue. As the Great Migration continued, the "rapidly growing black population" of Detroit "sought decent homes beyond the borders of the black ghetto" (Sugrue 29), but they were "systematically shut out of the private real estate market" (34). The Home Owners' Loan Corporation produced "residential security maps" that ranked neighborhoods from A to D according to their property values and "security," and most black neighborhoods were ranked D, which was coded "red" (43). White residents living in neighborhoods that were not redlined formed "neighborhood improvement associations" and drafted and signed "covenants… to preserve both architectural and social homogeneity" (44); they not only prohibited selling houses to blacks but also prohibited renovations that would make it possible for homeowners to divide their houses into units that could be rented to blacks. As a result of these efforts, less than one percent of the "single-family houses constructed in the metropolitan Detroit area in the 1940s were open to blacks" (43). So black Detroiters decided to "build their own houses" on the undeveloped "open fields of the Eight Mile area" (39). As more and more blacks moved into the area, many of them could only find seasonal work as "day laborers" because of the aforementioned restrictions on job opportunities, which led to large groups of black men waiting "at an informal outdoor labor market… on Eight Mile Road" (119). In such ways, racial conflicts, the real estate market, and government and corporate policies combined to "[impose] on the city's featureless topography all sorts of invisible boundaries" (234). And sometimes those boundaries were quite visible; "the developer of a proposed all-white subdivision" next to the 8 Mile area could not get financing for their project and therefore "constructed a foot-thick, six-foot-high wall… on the property line separating the black and white neighborhoods" (64) so that everybody could see that the new subdivision would be safely

separated from the redlined area. These lines produced "a cognitive map of the city" (121) divided by race and class, and 8 Mile Road was the most visible symbol of the lines that must not be crossed and the boundaries that must be defended. As more and more of these lines were crossed by the pressures of black population growth and housing demand, white residents fought harder to defend the boundaries of their neighborhoods. The "fiercest resistance to black movement occurred in… predominantly working class sections of the city," whose residents were also "members of the city's most powerful homeowners' organizations" (235), and many of these neighborhoods had "sizable Roman Catholic populations" (237); these residents were united by race and class and religion, and their "resistance" and resentment were fueled by the economic vulnerability of their homes and neighborhoods. They expressed such resentment and anxieties in "a language of discontent directed against public officials, blacks, and liberal reformers" (267); their leaflets and picket signs told a story of "oppressed homeowners" who had to "fight for our rights" (219).

As the resentment and anxieties of working class whites grew, not only in Detroit but around the country, conservative writers and politicians developed a strategy to mobilize those feelings and build a new coalition that would eventually become known as the "New Right," a movement whose many branches are traced by Nancy MacLean in *Freedom Is Not Enough: The Opening of the American Workplace*. One of its early sources was the *National Review*, founded by William F. Buckley, Jr. in 1955, which provided a platform for many conservative writers. M. Stanton Evans wrote of the U.S. as a "nation [that] has strayed from the values which once made it strong" (quoted in MacLean 47), and James Kilpatrick wrote, as the civil rights movement gained momentum in the 1960s, that the black man "has no right… to favored treatment in employment or anything else" and that such demands would only lead to "resentment [against] those who demand in the name of race what they have not earned in the way of work" (quoted in MacLean 63). Corporations adopted this language to defend their economic interests; the National Association of Manufacturers claimed that the Civil Rights Act was "perhaps the greatest encroachment ever undertaken by the Federal government into the personal and private affairs of individual citizens" and that the problems addressed by the law required not Federal government intervention but "free market solutions" (quoted in MacLean 67). The timing of the civil rights movement, especially nearing the 1970s, meant that "diversity arrived to American industry just as industry was leaving America" (Cowie 242), unavoidably leading to "heightened competition for dwindling opportunity" (239). Thus, the timing was right for Nixon's strategy to mobilize working class whites by focusing on groups with clearly-defined identities and resentments like workers in the "building trades" (MacLean 101). Through the *National Review*, Buckley also "began framing conservatism in a new way…as a defense of old-fashioned liberalism" (230), as did corporate America; for example, Joseph Coors declared that "our system of free enterprise is being threatened" (quoted in MacLean 239) and, more importantly, provided the money for Paul Weyrich "to launch the Heritage Foundation in 1973" (240). Through this alliance of writers, politicians, and corporate leaders and their combined efforts to appropriate and redirect white working class resentment and anxieties, the New Right was "successful in changing the terms of the debate by erasing public memory of [this] history" (341). Amidst the growing influence of the New Right and decreasing public awareness of the historical forces that shaped the racial and class divisions of American society, "activists found it hard to advance vital issues… that involved the changing economy and labor market" (324), enabling the corporate takeover of American politics and the unregulated excesses and irresponsible and unproductive speculation that I have described.

After Detroit became a majority-black city in the 1970s, its residents elected black mayors like Coleman Young and Kwame Kilpatrick, whose actions more often than not exacerbated the social and economic problems that they had inherited. Young was a well-known civil rights leader but "tried to woo industry leaders back to the Motor City with many corporate welfare enticements" (Thompson 208) without solving the underlying problems. Kilpatrick "proved to be one of the most corrupt mayors in American history" and was "convicted of twenty-four felonies" (Sugrue xx) in 2013, the same year that the city declared bankruptcy. He ran, according to investigative journalist Charlie LeDuff, "a mob-style enterprise that stole from the poorest people in America" while claiming to speak and fight for black Detroiters, "even though some of his biggest backers were the rich white industrialists who profited from" (LeDuff 282) his corruption and questionable decisions. For example, he gave a group of bankers and fund managers "a 1.44 billion dollar deal to fund the city's pension obligations using… derivatives and credit-default swaps" (Sugrue xx), accelerating the city's bankruptcy. Young and Kilpatrick were politicians with liberal social agendas but conservative economic policies, and could not offer alternatives to the rampant deregulation and speculation that were destroying workers' rights and the industrial base in their city. With the ascendancy of the New Right and the lack of a clear alternative vision, Detroit has, like the rest of the country, undergone a fundamental economic restructuring. Most of the new jobs

created in Detroit since the 1980s are "part-time, contingent work" (Sugrue 268), and in the U.S. today, "only 7 percent of private-sector employees" (Quart 65) belong to unions. This is, as Jefferson Cowie writes, "the new Wal-Mart working class" (Cowie 362), with no job security and no collective bargaining power and little hope to improve the quality of their lives. The only unions in the U.S. that remain influential are in the public sector, both because public sector jobs are still relatively secure and because they have a clearer vision of the role of unions in the new economy; Jerry Wurf, president of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, stated as early as 1974 that "we can stand pat as a movement that represents a declining percentage of the workforce… or we can make ourselves more relevant to the needs of workers in a postindustrial society" (quoted in Cowie 62). Such foresight is rare among the primary actors who are responsible for what happened to Detroit and what it has come to symbolize. The primary problem is the inability to grasp the complexity of the problems and envision possible solutions; you cannot find the road ahead if you do not even have a road map. In the absence of such a vision, the economic insecurity and anxieties of working class people continue to spread through the population that Alissa Quart calls the new "Middle Precariat," people who used to identify themselves and their families as middle class but have now "lost the narrative of their lives and futures" (Quart 6). The films and television series that I will discuss also provide an outline of the evolution of white working class displacement, resentment, and anxieties in the twenty-first century, using Detroit as an iconic reference point. The iconography of Detroit and its ruins also illuminates how the protagonists of these narratives lose a cognitive map of their lives, their city, their country; the familiar images of industrial collapse and urban decay start to lose their historical specificity and blur into a vague but pervasive impression of inevitable decline.

8 Mile **and** ***Gran Torino***

Rabbit lives in a trailer with his mother and younger sister, and works at New Detroit Stamping, one of the few remaining automobile industry factories in the city. He says to Manny, the foreman, "I really need some extra shifts, Manny," but he is ignored because he lacks seniority and everybody needs extra shifts and income. When he complains to a co-worker who has worked at the factory much longer, the older man says, "Stick to the plan, man. Just do your work and shut the fuck up." This is the new Detroit of limited opportunities and widespread cynicism and resignation. As Rabbit and his friends burn down an abandoned house that is being used by neighborhood drug dealers, he says, "When I was little, I used to wanna live in a house like this. You know, how it used to be." In other words, he wanted to live in the house as it was before it was abandoned and vandalized and graffiti-covered, in a Detroit that he can only imagine. This old Detroit is visually referenced when Rabbit and his friends drive into the downtown parking lot which is actually the ground floor of the Michigan Theater building; this is one of the iconic ruins of Detroit, showing in one evocative image both the grandeur of what Detroit used to be and the ugliness of what it has become. The future of the city seems to be presaged by the way that its present paves over and obliterates its past, the memory of which is literally being overrun. But unlike his co-workers at New Detroit Stamping, Rabbit dreams of a better future. As he tries to write lyrics for a rap song on his way to the factory, we see symbolic images of Detroit pass by outside the bus: shuttered stores with graffiti and broken windows, the ruins of a church, signs like "Liquor / Checks cashed" and "Indoor Gun Range / Guns for Rent." That last sign is particularly evocative. Detroit is a city where you can rent a gun if you need to kill somebody in a hurry. Looking at these images and the scribbled pages of his notebook, he struggles to put his experiences and feelings into words, with the soundtrack stuttering his revisions: "Still write / Real life… Still white / Hate life… Stage fright / Drawing a blank-like." These words highlight Rabbit's struggle to define himself and his place as a white Detroiter and to gain acceptance in the black-dominated field of hip hop. His rejection by the hip hop community is expressed by Li'l Tic in the rap battle at The Shelter, early in the film: "They laugh at you cause you white with a mike… This is hip hop, you don't belong, you're a tourist… This here's Detroit, 16 Mile Road is thataway." Here we see the racial divisions of the city expressed in terms of roads as boundaries; to be from north of 8 Mile Road is to be white and a "tourist" from the suburbs. All of these pressures and limitations make Rabbit question whether he can be different than his co-workers who have resigned themselves to keeping their jobs by keeping their mouths shut; he says to his friend Sol, who has given him a ride to the factory, "You ever wonder what point you gotta just say, fuck it, man. When you gotta stop living up here and start living down here?"

Most of Rabbit's co-workers, like the other rappers and the audience at The Shelter, are black. The feeling of always being an outsider is part of Rabbit's struggle to express himself. But in fact he is not an outsider, having been born and raised in Detroit, and in the rap battle at the end of the film, he expresses his realization that he belongs: "I *am* white, I *am* a fucking bum / I *do* live in a trailer with my mom… Don't ever try to judge me, dude / You don't know what the fuck I've been through / But I

know something about you / You went to Cranbrook, that's a private school… Fuck y'all if you doubt me." In other words, he belongs because of his class, unlike his opponent Papa Doc, who went to an exclusive private school and is pretending to be a gangster. And the audience at The Shelter identifies more with his experiences and his defiant attitude than with Papa Doc's pretensions. Thus, the film posits that recognition is more about lived experience than about race, and argues for a cross-racial identification based on class solidarity. The film ends, however, without showing or suggesting that Rabbit's life has changed or will change in the future; after winning the rap battle, he says to his friends, "I'm going back to work." Because Rabbit is played by Eminem and much of the film seems to be based on Eminem's biography, viewers may have seen the film as a rags-to-riches success story, but if we stay within the narrative itself, the film does not depict such hope for Rabbit's, and much less Detroit's, future. The images of Detroit and Rabbit's life that we are shown do not leave much room for optimism. But the film shows an awareness of the race and class divisions that affect the lives and self-definition of Detroiters and the need to cross those boundaries.

Gran Torino also deals, in different and problematic ways, with the changing race and class divisions of the city. Walt Kowalski is one of the last white Catholic working-class residents of a neighborhood being repopulated by a growing number of Hmong families. Walt seems to have stayed not because of his attachment to the neighborhood but because of his stubborn refusal to change and in spite of his resentment of the changes around him. As his son Mitch says, he is "still living in the fifties." He seems more attached to his 72 Gran Torino than his neighborhood, which suggests that his identity is tied to his many years of being a Ford worker. His only remaining friend from the Catholic community seems to be Martin, who owns the local barbershop. This, too, is symbolic. In *Made in Detroit*, Paul Clemens' memoir about growing up white and Catholic in Detroit, Clemens writes that living in his neighborhood was like living "on the dwindling edge of an inverted frontier" (9) surrounded by "Wild West lawlessness" (10). To describe the resentment of the older residents about the deterioration of their city, Clemens uses their conversations in Sal's barbershop. When one customer says that "it breaks my heart seeing what they've done to my old place," another customer says, "At least yours is still standing. Mine? Burnt to the ground" (77). As they leave behind deteriorating neighborhoods and move to new ones, what they share, what gives them a sense of community, is their resentment about what "they" are doing to their old neighborhoods. And "they" here clearly refers to the blacks who have moved into their old neighborhoods, since Clemens shows that whites like his family were running from the encroachment of blacks into formerly white working-class neighborhoods. This is what Martin's barbershop symbolizes in *Gran Torino*: a sense of community based on shared resentment, by working class whites who feel displaced and like they are defending a shrinking territory and a fading way of life.

However, this changes in the film as Walt becomes more and more involved in the lives of his Hmong neighbors. When Walt saves Thao from a Hmong gang, Thao's sister, Sue, tells him that he has become "a hero to the neighborhood," but he responds, "I'm not a hero… I just wanna be left alone." As this dialogue indicates, the film, directed by Clint Eastwood, self-consciously models itself on classic Westerns. When Janovich, the local priest, asks Walt why he pulled a gun on the gang instead of calling the police, Walt says (and Eastwood delivers the line as if he is imitating his own performances as a Western hero), "I prayed that they would show up, but nobody answered." This line is almost a parody of laconic tough talk in classic Westerns, but it also illustrates Walt's cynicism and bitterness; he has lost faith in the Catholic church as he has in the city and its leaders. Gradually, however, his attachment to the Hmongs and especially Thao gives him a new sense of community, and his resentment and cynicism are replaced by his hopes for Thao, who becomes a surrogate for the sons that he neglected and is estranged from. His threats against the Hmong gang lead to Sue being gang-raped and to Thao demanding that they (Walt and Thao) retaliate against the gang. In a conversation that could be from any number of classic Westerns, from *Shane* to *Unforgiven*, Thao asks Walt "what is it like to kill a man," and Walt says, "You don't wanna know… You don't want that on your soul. Now, I've got blood on my hands… That's why I'm going it alone tonight… You've got your whole life ahead of you." But the confrontation that is supposed to be the climax of a classic Western ends anti-climactically when Walt reaches into his jacket and pretends to pull out a gun, making the gang kill him and leading to their arrests. As he reaches into his jacket, he mutters, "Hail Mary, full of grace." the film comes full circle, with Walt evolving from a resentful and bitter loner who has lost all faith to a man who identifies with a new community and, in the process, regains his faith. The combination of his attachment to the Hmongs, his renewed sense of community, and his Catholic faith enables his self-sacrifice.

At one level, this is an optimistic vision of cross-racial identification and the possibility of new communities coming together to rebuild Detroit, which is imagined as a new frontier, a land of opportunity for those willing to work hard enough. At another level, however, the film's vision of work and community is problematic. Walt offers to help Thao get a job in construction since he "[knows]

people in the trades." Such connections were cultivated and reinforced, both by unions and contractors, in an attempt to protect workers in the "trades," often by excluding black workers. Before Walt introduces Thao to construction supervisor Tim Kennedy, he says to Thao, "When I vouch for somebody, that means I've given them my word. And I don't want you making me look bad." And after giving Thao a job, Tim says to Walt, "You owe me one, Walt." This transaction illustrates how the construction industry functions; workers are hired not because of their qualifications (Thao knows almost nothing about construction) but because of their connections. The fact that Thao gets the job does not change the systematic problem of insularity, and could be said to disguise the fact that such insularity is the result of a history of protecting white privilege. And fittingly in this regard, Thao has to engage in another form of disguise to get the job; Walt teaches him how to talk "like a real man" by making Thao listen while he talks to Martin, then demanding that Thao imitate their conversation, including cursing and complaining about your "girlfriend," your "car," your "boss," and other "people who are not in the room." Thao, the immigrant boy, must adopt the language and values of white working-class men to be accepted into their insular world, and these values include making fun of women and other men who are not part of the community, not allowed "in the room." Thao must be accepted into this community to get a construction job, and this requires him not only to adopt their language and values but also to understand and share their insularity and resentment. In other words, he must learn how to protect the privileged space that he is being allowed to enter. This transformation is complete when Thao inherits Walt's Gran Torino, the film's central symbol of Walt's past and working-class identity. The new community that the Western elements of the film make viewers imagine as a hope for a better future is not new at all; the film uses Thao to disguise the fact that it ultimately envisions a return to the traditional white working-class values that contributed to Detroit's decline.

Hung* and *Low Winter Sun

If *8 Mile* and *Gran Torino* are at least aware of the race and class divisions in Detroit, the television series *Hung* and *Low Winter Sun* depict the displacement and anxieties of white protagonists without dealing directly with race as an issue. As a result, while Detroit becomes a symbol of spreading economic insecurity and deepening anxieties, those problems are seen only as problems of class or, more specifically, the erosion of class boundaries. The opening sequence of *Hung* shows Ray Drecker walking (while taking off his clothes) from downtown Detroit to his suburban house. He walks past "The Fist," a downtown monument to boxer Joe Louis, and heads north (we know this because "The Fist" is pointed north), past the Packard plant and past the "8 Mile Road" sign, on his way home. "The Fist" was envisioned as a civil rights monument and is pointed north, which is supposed to symbolize that Louis' fist is aimed at racial injustice. The symbolism of this seemed obvious to residents of Detroit and its northern suburbs. Whites who live in the suburbs are responsible for the racial injustice that the fist is aimed at, and the monument is a public endorsement of this view. As Clemens writes in his memoir, "The Fist" was for white residents "the most disliked entity in Detroit" (15), becoming a symbolic target for white resentment and a frequent target of vandalism. The fact that Ray's walk, which will leave him naked at the end, starts at "The Fist" is an allusion to this symbolism and resentment. The pilot episode begins with a montage of iconic images – Tiger Stadium being demolished, old cars being crushed in a junkyard, the Packard plant, Michigan Central Station – over which Ray narrates, "Everything's falling apart. And it all starts here in Detroit, the headwaters of a river of failure. Thank God my parents aren't around to watch the country they loved going to shit. They were proud Americans. They had normal jobs and made a normal living. They fit in… What would I tell them if they saw me now? That I'm not to blame? That it's not my fault? They didn't raise me that way, They taught me to take responsibility and get the job done." Detroit is a symbol of American failure, and Ray is an embodiment of the consequences of that national failure, a "river" that cannot be contained and that Ray cannot understand. His comments about his parents show that his sense of diminishment and powerlessness is connected to the loss of a working-class identity that was made possible by economic stability, a sense of community, and traditional values like patriotism and a strong work ethic. All of that was "normal" back then; for Ray, who has a full-time job at West Lakefield High School but has to get a second job as a male prostitute to keep his house (that his parents built), nothing is "normal" anymore. In his confusion and frustration, he turns to Floyd's "Wealth Whiz Seminar," a motivational step-by-step guide to becoming rich fast by "marketing your tool." Ray has no "tool" that he can market as something that only he can provide except, he decides, the size of his penis; "I'm not that smart. I'm not that talented… I look around and everybody seems to have accomplished something but me… So I'm pretty much at the precipice here, and my big dick is all I've got." When Tanya, an under-employed poet who decides to become Ray's pimp, asks him what kinds of services he can provide, he says, "I'm a normal guy, you know? I'll do normal things. Market me that way." The irony of the word "normal" (Tanya asks him,

"What's normal?") highlights Ray's sense of displacement; the lifestyle that his working-class parents enjoyed and the values that he learned from them do not apply to his life and world.

Tanya used to work, part-time, at Ray's high school teaching poetry, until the program was eliminated. The school is permeated by anxiety because programs keep getting eliminated and teachers keep getting laid off. When Ray goes to Rhonda, the principal, to ask about his own job, she tells him that "the whole district is bankrupt… Seventy percent of the teachers in this school are about to be laid off… You'll get to reapply for your jobs next semester. And if you get rehired, you'll keep your former salary, but not the benefits." In other words, the downsizing will produce fewer jobs with less economic security, but the teachers will have to accept the new conditions. This plot line reflects the reality of what was happening to American public school teachers; "between 2003 and 2013, Detroit shut about 150 public schools" (Sugrue xviii). And Ray's second job is a parody of the choices that teachers were forced to make. For example, so many teachers were supplementing their decreasing incomes as Uber drivers that the company started using them in their marketing. In 2014, Uber created the slogan "Teachers: Driving Our Future" (Quart 148). They also started a blog where teacher-drivers, or "UberEducators" (160), posted things like "Uber opens the door for more possibilities and delivers a meaningful impact to the communities we serve" (149). Ray's situation, then, is a satirical representation of the insecurity and anxieties that public school teachers were experiencing. And teachers are an effective example to illustrate how such insecurity and anxieties have moved from being industrial and working-class issues to permeating American society. Ray's anxiety is not exactly a working-class anxiety. He is worried that he will never enjoy the lifestyle or know the stability that working class people like his parents once did. And this sense of displacement leads to resentment that he is not to blame for "the country [going] to shit" but is paying for it, while corporate and political leaders claim that the new global economy "opens the door for more possibilities" for people like him. The problem here is that the racial component of this displacement and resentment is never addressed in the series, although the opening sequence alludes to a civil rights monument and white resentment. A history of racial conflict is erased so that viewers can see Ray as an embodiment of the powerlessness and hopelessness of the average American man. And Detroit becomes a symbol of the injustice done to him, stripping him of his sense of identity and community and leaving him naked with nothing but his masculinity and resentment.

Hung both suggests and obfuscates the fact that Ray's downward mobility represents the failures and anxieties of white men, spreading from its "headwaters" in the rust belt. In *Low Winter Sun*, Frank Agnew's downward spiral becomes a clearer but no less problematic representation of the resentment that such anxieties elicit. Frank is a respected veteran detective who becomes more and more deeply involved in the rampant corruption within the police department. The narrative of his life is paralleled by depictions of Detroit's inexorable decline. The opening scene of the pilot episode shows Frank leaving his house to go to work; it looks like a typical house in a middle-class neighborhood until we see the abandoned houses (with graffiti and broken windows) across the street, and then we see him drive past the Packard plant to get to the downtown police station. As his life spirals out of control, he listens to a radio announcer joking about the city's bankruptcy: "Chapter 9… it's on its way… The bus ain't coming… They just cut the driver's salary by 15 percent. That fool's gonna look up and see that check the city's paying him after filing Chapter 9, and he's gonna drive that bus and all of his passengers straight into the river. And the fire department ain't gonna fish them out, cause they got the same 15 percent cut, too… You cutting the salary of this crooked-ass police force? You just made a whole new generation of dirty cops. Even the good ones… Yeah, it's over." In the same episode ("Ann Arbor"), he goes to an abandoned public swimming pool, then goes to his ex-wife and says, "I was at the pool today… such a great summer.… I don't know how I got here… how this became my life." He reaches a low point in his life as Detroit runs out of money and hope; like the city, he is drowning. He nods, grinning and laughing, as the announcer tells his bitter jokes, until he says that every cop in Detroit, "even the good ones," will soon be "dirty." This is Frank's moment of self-recognition that he is no longer one of the "good ones," that everything that he has worked for and believed in is "over." This self-recognition leads, not to a confession or some kind of redemption, but to an outburst at the bank, where the manager tells him that he cannot close his accounts because they do not have enough cash to cover even those modest amounts: "I've been with this bank for sixteen years and you had to look at the screen in order to know my name. Four years ago, I came in here when you were hoarding your bailout money, I wanted to refinance, you turned me down… I don't wanna hear about cash on hand. It's my money!" His resentment is expressed in terms of his desire for recognition and respect and the unfairness of an economic system that bails out banks and corporations but ignores the needs of ordinary people, and climaxes when he shouts, "It's my money!" His resentment is amplified by everything that he has lost: his job, his family, his faith in himself, any hope for his or his city's future. The intensity of his resentment

and anger becomes more disturbing when we consider everything that is left out of view by this narrow focus on one Detroit detective; detached from the context of white working-class resentment, his outburst can be justified as expressing the indignation of a representative common man, although his sense of victimization is connected to his anger about not receiving the recognition to which he feels entitled. In *Hung* and *Low Winter Sun*, viewers are expected to identify with the resentment of white men like Ray and Frank without associating it with race, to see it as the inevitable product of social decay and corruption and an economic system rigged against the common man.

It Follows

Zombie narratives are by nature apocalyptic narratives, presenting "a grim view of the modern apocalypse in which society's supportive infrastructure irrevocably breaks down" (Bishop 11). And the popularity of such narratives is related to anxieties about capitalism; "the end of the world means the end of capitalism," where all productive activities and economic transactions have ended and "everything is free for the taking" (23), at least until the goods inevitably run out. A crucial point about *It Follows* is that the monster only vaguely resembles a zombie and can only be referred to as "it," a point that suggests both the pervasiveness and the incomprehensibility of the multiple forms of decline that Detroit has come to symbolize. Jay and her friends (Yara, Kelly, Paul, Greg) reside in Sterling Heights, a suburban town six miles north of 8 Mile Road and one of the safest cities of its size (population over 100,000) in Michigan. The population of Sterling Heights increased from 61,365 in 1970 to 124,471 in 2000, when the town was 90.7 percent white and 1.3 percent black. This is not unusual for towns in suburban Macomb County, although Sterling Heights, whose southern boundary is 14 Mile Road, is relatively close to Detroit. Jay's suburban life is interrupted when she has sex with Hugh in his car and wakes up inside the Packard plant, tied to a wheelchair. Hugh explains to her that "this thing, it's gonna follow you. Somebody gave it to me, and I passed it to you… It can look like someone you know or it could be a stranger in a crowd. It can look like anyone. Just sleep with someone as soon as you can. Just pass it along." As "it" emerges from the darkness inside the Packard plant and approaches Jay, she screams, "What the fuck do you want?" but "it" never speaks; "it" just keeps following her, slowly but relentlessly. The Packard plant loses its historicity and is reduced to the source of an unidentifiable and incomprehensible monstrosity. To discover what is happening to them, Jay and her friends drive into Detroit, past abandoned houses and stores, to the abandoned house where Hugh lived. The abstract horror-film music that accompanies these suburban teenagers whenever they enter Detroit reinforces its image as a place of vague and incomprehensible horror. They drive further north to Greg's vacation house to escape from "it," but "it" catches up to them; you cannot escape from "it," you can only "buy some time" as Hugh says. So they return to Detroit to confront "it," and along the way, Yara says, "When I was a girl, my parents wouldn't allow me to go south of 8 Mile. And I didn't even know what that meant until I got a little older… And I used to think about how shitty and weird that was. I mean, I had to ask permission to go to the state fair with my best friend and her parents only because it was a few blocks past the border." This is the only reference in the film to the realities of Detroit, and although these teenagers have all heard similar things from their parents ("My mom said the same thing," Jay says), their understanding of those realities is limited to – or limited by – the signification of 8 Mile Road, which to them seems like the "border" of another country.

The cognitive map of these teenagers is severely limited, as their parents want it to be. This is another example of efforts by middle class whites to protect their families and communities by drawing and defending boundaries. But the economic and social conditions that have ruined Detroit are spreading and cannot be stopped. At the end of the film, Jay and Paul are walking down a quiet street in Sterling Heights, followed by a man who may or may not be "it." While the parents may be desperate in their desire to defend their privilege from an economic decline that seems pervasive and inevitable, their desperation just seems "shitty and weird" to their children. Clemens, in his account of his childhood in Detroit, describes how his parents tried to raise him in a homogenous environment and protect him from danger and contagion. He went to Catholic schools that were "all white and, it sometimes seemed, all Italian" (Clemens 73), and when he joined a local baseball team "at ten years old" his black teammates seemed to be "from another country" (58). This is similar to the protectiveness and resulting ignorance revealed in *It Follows*, which suggests that the resentment that Clemens describes is likely in Sterling Heights and Macomb County as well. The film's use of teenagers is of course a familiar plot-element of the genre, but it serves in this instance to highlight both the pervasiveness and the reductiveness of the anxieties that Detroit symbolizes. Jay and her friends do not know, and have no way of knowing, what they are afraid of. They just know that it will keep following them no matter how far they try to get from it. Nobody is safe whether you are black or white, and no neighborhood is safe whether it is south or north of 8 Mile Road. This erosion of boundaries and the increasing complexity

and incomprehensibility of the socioeconomic conditions that are eroding them are symbolically captured by the reduction of such fears and anxieties to "it." As McNally argues, "the very insidiousness of the capitalist grotesque has to do with its invisibility… its colonization of the essential fabric of everyday-life…its elusive everydayness" (2).

McNally also argues that the "most salient" examples of such monsters, embodiments of the conditions and anxieties produced by capitalism, appear "in environments in which bourgeois relations are still experienced as strange and horrifying," and he gives folk stories from "the African subcontinent," a place "ravaged by the forces of globalisation" (2) where "seventy percent of the people live below the poverty-threshold" (221), as a contemporary example. It makes sense, then, that a society where socioeconomic conditions are too complicated to be grasped and anxieties are too pervasive to be directed at anything tangible would produce monsters like "it." In *Zombie Capitalism: Global Crisis and the Relevance of Marx*, Chris Harman argues that the global economy has become "a zombie system" (12). With deregulation and the expansion of global markets, "opportunities grew ever greater for financial institutions to make profits through borrowing and lending that had no immediate connections with processes of production" (281), so that "all sorts of speculative, unproductive activities flourished" (283). And once such deregulated and casino-like speculation has taken over the global economy, it cannot be stopped, no matter how unproductive and self-destructive it becomes. Like zombies mindlessly overrunning everything, global capitalism is a "runaway system" that "puts into question the very possibility of sustaining human life on Earth" (328), unless, as when the U.S. government bailed out the Big Three, "the state" provides "life support systems… to keep the system from complete collapse" (Harman 326). Zombie narratives are also narratives about building and defending walls; like the survivors desperately trying to keep out the zombies overrunning and destroying everything, people often rely on walls for protection or to feel protected, as Wendy Brown illustrates in *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*. The walls that countries build "respond in terms of both state policies and the anxieties of their subjects to a growing lawlessness lapping at the edges of nation-states and streaming across them" (Brown 83), and the more anxieties people feel and the less control their governments seem to have over the global forces that produce their anxieties, the more they support such wall-building, even when they know that the walls cannot protect them from what they fear. The actual wall is less important than the psychological protection that it provides, a psychological wall that "contains" our anxieties and provides an "illusion" (Brown 133) of protection. Detroit's history is also a history of such walls, boundaries both real and psychological that have been defended and redrawn and defended again. *It Follows* shows how those psychological walls have collapsed as economic decline and social decay overrun all attempts to contain them. "It" thus reflects not only the unexplainable and uncontainable anxieties of middle class whites but also the failure of the cognitive maps that once explained their anxieties and provided at least the illusion that they could be contained.

Some Political Consequences

Quart warns that more and more Americans are becoming part of "the new disgruntled who are voting for independent or renegade presidential candidates" (46). This is the danger of the failure of cognitive maps in an increasingly unstable world, especially when such anxieties are compounded by the actions of unresponsive or cynical politicians. As the New Right was organizing and consolidating their influence, the left, as represented by the Democratic Party, failed to provide the alternative vision that the country needed. As growing numbers of Americans were affected by stagflation and economic restructuring and workers were rapidly losing their economic security and bargaining power in the 1970s, "Carter emerged as a new breed of conservative Democrat of the type that would go on to dominate the party" (Cowie 266), becoming "symptomatic of a party that could not find a unified voice to speak to the issues of the majority of working people" (103). And with Bill Clinton and "the rise of the Democratic Leadership Council," the party moved to an even more "economically conservative position" (309). In 2005, Jonathan Chait, a Democratic Party pundit, declared that "liberalism is a more deeply pragmatic governing philosophy – more open to change, more receptive to empiricism, and ultimately better at producing policies that improve the human condition" (quoted in Rensin). As the New Right redefined conservatism to position themselves as populist defenders of traditional values, the Democratic Party redefined liberalism as "the ideology of pure competence," what some commentators have called "managerial liberalism" (Rensin). In other words, Democrats are smarter and more practical and more professional, simply more competent, than Republicans. Hillary Clinton wrote in her memoir *What Happened*, "Bernie Sanders attacked me for raising money from people who worked in finance… Bernie was outraged about everything. He thundered on at every event about the sins of the 'millionaires and billionaires'… I was more focused on offering practical solutions that would address real problems" (quoted in Jones). Sanders was "outraged" about the socioeconomic conditions and government policies

that I have outlined, whereas Clinton promised that her policies would be more "practical," not exactly an inspiring message at a time of so much instability and anxiety. In the *New York Times*, whose editors shared Clinton's aversion to Sanders, his politics and rhetoric were subtly ridiculed; "Bernie Sanders led a revival-style meeting of his progressive devotees…[who] hailed him in worshipful language," while "the party's elected leaders" (note the emphasis on "elected," suggesting that Sanders is an independent who does not represent the Democratic Party) "are far more dispassionate, sharing a [pragmatic] recognition of the need to scrounge for votes" (Burns and Martin). The Democratic Party belongs to practical and "dispassionate" political managers, not "inflexible left-wingers" (Burns and Martin) like Sanders.

In the absence of cognitive maps and a collective vision of what is politically possible, increasing instability and multiplying anxieties will inevitably lead to a politics of resentment, as shown by the ascendancy and enduring influence of Ronald Reagan. His campaign pollster Richard Worthlin concluded that "Southern white protestants, blue collar workers in the industrial states, urban ethnics, and rural voters" formed a voting bloc who were willing to "follow some authority figure" who demonstrated "the willpower… to get this country back on track" (quoted in Cowie 306). This voting bloc became known as "Reagan Democrats," and Macomb County was "the home of the famed Reagan Democrats" (LeDuff 37). The resentment and anxieties reflected by the films and television series discussed in this essay become increasingly volatile and dangerous as the socioeconomic conditions that produce them become more complex and difficult to map and seemingly inescapable. In their depictions of Detroit and its ruins, we also see a reflection of the waning of historicity from this iconography. The history that produced these icons of American decline disappears, until they only remain as icons of a vague and incomprehensible horror. Such historical amnesia can be seen when politicians and journalists talk about Donald Trump's slogan "Make America Great Again" without mentioning that he merely copied Reagan's slogan; this allows them to treat Trump's victory over Clinton as an isolated phenomenon rather than a continuation of New Right rhetoric and manipulation of white working class resentment. Any vision of how the "river of failure" in which so many Americans feel like they are drowning can be stopped must begin with an understanding of the ways in which a history of race and class divisions interacts with global economic forces.

Works Cited

Bishop, Kyle William. *American Zombie Gothic: The Rise and Fall (and Rise) of the Walking Dead in Popular Culture*. McFarland & Company, 2010.
Brown, Wendy. *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*. Zone Books, 2010.
Burns, Alexander, and Jonathan Martin. "Democrats in Split-Screen: The Base Wants It All, the Party Wants to Win." *New York Times*, 11 June, 2017.
Clemens, Paul. *Made in Detroit*. Anchor Books, 2006.
Cowie, Jefferson. *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class.* The New Press, 2012.
8 Mile. Directed by Curtis Hanson, Universal Studios, 2002.
Gran Torino. Directed by Clint Eastwood, Warner Brothers Pictures, 2008.
Harman, Chris. *Zombie Capitalism: Global Crisis and the Relevance of Marx*. Haymarket Books, 2010.
Hung: The Complete First Season. HBO Home Entertainment, 2009. DVD.
Ingrassia, Paul. Crash Course: *The American Automobile Industry's Road to Bankruptcy and Bailout – and Beyond*. Random House, 2011.
It Follows. Directed by David Robert Mitchell, Northern Lights Films, 2014.
Jones, Sarah. "Hillary Clinton Doesn't Get It." *New Republic*, 13 September, 2017.
LeDuff, Charlie. *Detroit: An American Autopsy*. Penguin Books, 2014.
Low Winter Sun: The Complete Series. Anchor Bay Entertainment, 2014. DVD.
MacLean, Nancy. *Freedom Is Not Enough: The Opening of the American Workplace*. Harvard UP, 2008.
McNally, David. *Monsters of the Market: Zombies, Vampires and Global Capitalism*. Haymarket Books, 2012.
Quart, Alissa. *Squeezed: Why Our Families Can't Afford America*. Echo, 2018.
Rensin, Emmett. "The Blathering Superego and the End of History." *Los Angeles Times*, 18 June, 2017.
Sugrue, Thomas. *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*. Princeton UP, 2014.
Thompson, Heather Ann. *Whose Detroit?: Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City*. Cornell UP, 2017.

Author's profile: Jae H. Roe is a professor of American Culture at Sogang University in South Korea and teaches courses on American history, literature, and popular culture. His research interests include popular music, the Western, and science fiction. His publications include "'The Digital Fabric of the World': Gibson's Posthuman Vision in *Idoru*" (2002), "Pride and Prejudice: The White Working Class Tradition of American Country Music" (2006), and "The 'Natural Man' and the Populist Elitism of the Western" (2010). Email: <jhroe@sogang.ac.kr>